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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 003484

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2014

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [KPAL](#) [IZ](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDANIANS VENT ANGER AT U.S., WHILE OTHERS  
QUIETLY SEEK CLOSER U.S. TIES

REF: A. AMMAN 03406

[B](#). AMMAN 03388

[C](#). AMMAN 03380

[D](#). AMMAN 03148

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale for Reasons 1.5 (b), (d)

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) Strong public opposition to U.S. policies in the region and, more recently, outrage over the Abu Ghreib prisoner abuse story continue to fuel anti-U.S. sentiment in Jordan. Articles attacking the U.S. figure prominently in the press while opposition groups have stepped up their activities and statements denouncing American "arrogance" and "war crimes." Some Embassy contacts have deemed the current level of anti-Americanism as "unprecedented" in recent years. Nevertheless, some Jordanians have refused to jump on the anti-U.S. bandwagon and are instead seeking strengthened ties with the Embassy and/or American organizations. End Summary.

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THE U.S. TAKES A BEATING  
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[1](#)2. (U) The Israeli killings of HAMAS leaders Sheikh Yassin and Sheikh Rantissi, coupled with the President's letter of assurances to Israeli PM Sharon, prompted marked anti-U.S. sentiment in Jordan (see ref d) in April. The recent revelation of prisoner abuses at the Abu Ghreib prison in Iraq has further heightened Jordanian public ire (see refs a, b). Seeking to capitalize on anti-U.S. feelings, opposition parties and professional associations have orchestrated a series of events and public statements denouncing the U.S. The Jordanian Engineers Association, for example, organized a workshop urging support for the Iraqi "resistance," while the Professional Associations sponsored a rally to condemn the "Anglo-American occupation of Iraq." The President of the Jordan Press Association called on journalists to boycott Embassy activities. Even the Jordan Medical Association joined the fray, condemning U.S. mistreatment of prisoners as a "criminal act" that confirmed the hypocrisy of the stated U.S. commitment to democracy, freedom and human rights. In addition to rebuking the U.S. for its abuse of detainees (see ref c), the Islamic Action Front (IAF) announced that it had rejected participation in an upcoming Embassy-sponsored International Visitor program for Parliament members to protest "hostile U.S. policies towards Arabs" and "the American massacres in Iraq."

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THE PRESS STILL ON THE ATTACK  
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[1](#)3. (U) The Jordanian media continues its extensive negative coverage of reported prisoner abuse in Iraq. Press articles and editorials repeatedly accuse the U.S. of "war crimes" and widespread gross violations of human rights. One story May 6 alleged that U.S. forces "beat up" Jordanian truck drivers at the Iraqi border for refusing to pay 50 Jordanian dinars (roughly \$70 USD) to Iraqi authorities, while a columnist claimed that he had a CD showing photos of Iraqi women being raped by their American jailers. (NOTE: Embassy has sent this columnist, and another writer who referred to the alleged rape photos, a letter that details Embassy Cairo's discovery that these photos originated from a pornographic website.) Coverage of the President's Arabic satellite interviews has been extensive, but has focused on the absence of a direct statement of apology.

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MP FEELS THE HEAT  
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[1](#)4. (C) Anti-American press coverage has affected some pro-U.S. Jordanians. Reformist member of Parliament Raed Qaqish (Christian East Banker, Balqa - 1st District) took two members of an American NGO early in the week to the town of Salt for a meeting to discuss possible development projects. Qaqish had not informed the meeting organizers in advance about his guests, but told PolCouns there had been no negative reaction at the gathering. Two days later, however, several press stories blasted him for his alleged error in

judgment in bringing Americans to a public event. MP Mahmoud Kharabsheh (East Banker, Balqa - 1st District) told PolOff May 5 that many people in Salt were still very angry with Qaqish and that he had even heard of "death threats" against him. This anger, according to Kharabsheh and other contacts, stemmed from a high level of anti-Americanism in Jordan that is "unprecedented" in recent years.

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GOOD WITH THE BAD  
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15. (C) Not all Jordanians have jumped on the anti-U.S. bandwagon. Embassy contacts, for the most part, continue their cooperation and cordial relations with EmbOffs, albeit perhaps a bit more discreetly. In some cases, Jordanians are even seeking to strengthen their ties with the Embassy. The relentless Father Nabil Haddad, a Melkite Catholic priest and interfaith tolerance activist, hosted PolCouns at a dinner with American Jewish peace activists May 6, declaring that he wants to expand dialogue and programs with the Embassy on religious tolerance. Within the GOJ, employees at the Ministry of Political Development have asked for Embassy advice and assistance in promoting political reforms. Even MP Qaqish has said that he will continue to pursue development programs with U.S. NGOs to benefit his constituents.

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COMMENT  
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16. (C) Anti-Americanism in Jordan is nothing new, but the intensity and pervasiveness of this sentiment has increased. Perhaps more troubling is the recent shift of criticism away from U.S. government policies to U.S. society. Prompted by the Abu Ghreib story, and illustrated by the incident in Salt, Jordanians who used to speak admiringly of American values are now questioning what they think lies beneath U.S. culture.

17. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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HALE